DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 802 FL 006 076

AUTHOR Shuy, Roger W.
TITLE Current Trends in Social Dialectology.
PUB DATE Mar 74
NOTE 39p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC Not Available from EDRS. PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Dialect Studies; Education; *English; Interdisciplinary Approach; Language Instruction; *Linguistics; Nonstandard Dialects; *Social Dialects; *Sociolinguistics; *Verbal Communication

ABSTRACT

The formal study of social dialects has received increasing attention since about the middle of the sixties. In linguistics, the study of social dialectology has resulted in the clear demonstration of the importance of sociolinguistic variation in linguistic theory in contrast to the former preoccupation with linguistic universals. In education, the analysis of social dialects has contributed to the understanding of the dialects of the minorities, particularly in teaching oral usage, reading, and writing. Also, the current concern with the unfairness of standardized testing is partially a result of the study of social dialects. In relation to other fields, dialect study has a great potential. In medicine, for example, doctors would have far better rapport with their patients from minority groups if they understood their dialects. Because descriptive studies are still lacking for many speech communities in America, the possibility of further investigation in social dialectology is insured for many years to come. (LG)

ED 090802

Current Trends in Social Dialectology

To appear as a chapter in
John Algeo (ed.)
Current Trends in the Study of American English
Mouton

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Roger W. Shuy
Georgetown University
March 1974

FL 006 076

Current Trends in Social Dialects

Roger W. Shuy

By whatever term we choose to call them, social dialects have likely been a source of interest to American English speakers from the time of the of the first utterances of English on this continent. It would be ludicrous to say that the study of social dialects is a phenomenon which developed in the sixties, since it is quite probable that man has always used language as an indication of social status. The curious aspect of this apparent universal characteristic is that man is nearly unaware of what he is doing when he makes such judgments. He is even relatively unaware of the fact that he does it. Only a precious few seem to be really aware of how they accomplish what they are doing.

Nevertheless, the formal study of social dialect seems to have been a luxury to the academic world until very recently. We have many written records of the attempts of writers to capture the general nature of the dialects spoken by slaves, by mountaineers, by backwoodsmen, by poor urban or rural Blacks, by uneducated athletes or by characters in comic strips, movies or novels. Some were apparently exact, some were exaggerations. But accurate or not, these written records stand as monuments of the curiosity of Americans to the kind of social variability used by their countrymen.

Over the years, as linguists have come to study and understand social dialects more and more, we have also come to realize that the phenomenon is infinitely more complex than we have ever imagined. We have learned for

example, that we will need to come to grips with the possibility that variation is not haphazard nor willy-nilly, but that there is predictability even in variation. Linguists have had to rethink their time-honored positions that form and function are separable in language study and that speech is the implementation of grammar, rather than an organized social occasion. In addition, linguists have had to realize that such things as speech communities exist (not bound by dialects or even by languages) and that language function has social (not just referential) meaning. In terms of methodology, students of social dialect have had to experiment with developing or borrowing some different research strategies, largely from sociology and psychology. In terms of analytical routines, social dialect researchers have had to devise new approaches, reactivate old ones and borrow, again, largely from related fields. In short, the study of social dialects has opened a number of new vistas in linguistics. The total impact of a decade of relatively intensive research in this area has only begun to be felt.

The study of social dialects in this country might be viewed in terms of its various missions: to linguistics, to education and to other fields. Like all missions, those of social dialect study began with a set of purposes which have been, to date, only partially accomplished.

The Mission to Linguistics. Perhaps it is characteristic of all disciplines that beginnings are found in the real conflicts of life but that development involves the processes of abstraction, theory and supra-real generalization. This is probably as it ought to be. For linguistics, at least, the heavy emphasis brought by Noam Chomsky and his followers was on the abstract, the universal and the theoretical. And linguistics certainly needed the academic

respectability of theory in order to maintain itself as an academic field. In fact, a decade later it now seems clearly evident that such a focus may have saved linguistics as an academic field. But such changes almost always bring about overreactions and polarizations. For example, in the concentrated effort to find universals, linguists tended to ignore particulars. In the attempt to find underlying rules, they tended to overlook interesting patterns on the surface. In their efforts to develop a sound theory, they tended to say that everything else was trivial.

In linguistics, the one-sided dominance of such an approach began to crumble when it became clear that the more we learned about the universals of language, the less likely it was that a grammar could ever be written. Speculative arguments over the best ways of deriving surface features from deep structure began to take on the appearance of academic game-playing. Nothing was verifiable (except through rationality) and variability was swept under the rug and called uninteresting. Annual meetings of The Linguistic Society of America gradually turned from their formerly broad concern for language in its psychological, historical, social, educational, geographical, physiological and theoretical states to an almost exclusive focus on language as grammatical theory. A drift of members developed from which the organization is only now beginning to recover. Anthropological linguists, psycholinguists, applied linguists and even historical linguists began to drop-out and to give their papers at more congenial and specialized meetings.

At least three things began to bring about a change in this state of affairs. One was the general broadening of interests which began to develop in the sixties, leading to new kinds of interdisciplinary studies. The second was

the development of interest in problems faced by minority peoples, especially in the schools. The third was related to the general discomfort of separating the study of formal grammar from the semantic aspects of language. Linguists began to take an interest in urban language and to understand that past research and analytical methodologies were no longer viable. New data-gathering techniques were required and new modes of analysis were needed. Meanwhile, linguists who had been interested in language variation as it is found in the creolization and pidginization of language also began to apply their knowledge to urban social dialect, particularly the language of the urban, northern Black English speakers, often providing important historical backgrounds for language change and offering analytical insights brought about by their own perspectives. The general focus, of course, was on variability, not on abstract uniformity and the critical measurement point was provided by the variability offered by Vernacular Black English. It was thought of as an area of educational attention. It was thought to be an interesting source of study by psychologists (behavioral psychologists thought the language embodies attitudes and cognitive psychologists thought it inferred them). Everything seemed ripe for this focus on Vernacular Black English except for one thing--nobody in the academic world seemed to know very much about it.

As is so often the case, the problem born in the classroom took several years to find nourishment from the disciplines which could help feed it (psychology, anthropology, linguistics, sociology). And, until proper attention could be given, it developed several dangerous symptoms caused by an improper diet of home-made nourishments. Rumors developed that the patient was non-verbal, that he had no communicative exchanges with his parents, that he had a miniscule vocabulary and that he was crushed by noise in the home,

a multitude of siblings and some sort of inordinate squalor. His language was considered unsystematic and haphazard and he was thought to reflect cognitive deficits in the failure of his oral language to match that of his middle class teachers. If ever there was a field in need of research, it was this one.

Yet the research that was attempted was met with criticism almost on every side. Educators got to the problem first, offering suggestions for altering the speech of Black children to match classroom expectations (Golden 1965). Later this was to be attacked as wiping out the child's culture. Equally serious was the attack by linguists that the teachers had not analyzed the language accurately (or at all) and had stressed the teaching of insignificant features rather than crucial ones. It took a year or two, but an analysis of Vernacular Black English was gradually carried out, making use of Black scholars whenever possible, but usually by whites alone. Seminal studies were done in New York (by William Labov, Paul Cohen, Clarence Robbins and K. C. Lewis 1965), in Detroit (by Roger Shuy, Walt Wolfram and William Riley 1968), in Washington (by Ralph Fasold 1972) and in Los Angeles (by Stanley Legum 1971). Generalizations about the findings of these studies have been made by Fasold and Wolfram (1970) in relatively non-technical language. These studies have also been subjected to attack, frequently by Black scholars who can see error in the analysis or who object to the fact that they were done, in the main, by whites. Their attack frequently asserts that whites can never know how Black English really works, that this is just another case of whites trying to belittle or hold back Blacks by calling attention to weakness rather than strength, that not all Blacks talk that way or that the white analysts have improper or self-serving motives for studying (exploiting) Blacks. Conserva-

tive school people have attacked such studies as permissive and generally contributing to the "anything goes" philosophy which presumably characterizes linguists anyway. Lastly, linguists have attacked each other's analysis for various reasons (quite predictably in a field which fosters such behavior).

In terms of actual analytical approaches, the current study of social dialects leans largely on three major viewpoints. The first advocates the identification of social groups as the primary, independent variable, with language differences as dependent variables. The second view argues for the essential quality of social and linguistic variables, letting the predominating differentiation rise to the top via statistical measures. The third view advocates that linguistic variation should be primary, with social grouping growing out of it as a dependent variable.

The Social Group as Primary.

Several important characteristics contrast these recent approaches of Labov, Shuy, Wolfram, Fasold and others from the study of variation carried out by dialect geographers. In addition to a more sophisticated sampling technique, the new social dialect study attempted to provide a less structured and more natural body of data from each informant. The need for large amounts of continuous free conversation was stressed and the single item response formats of the Atlas questionnaire were down-played. Deliberate efforts were made to obtain speech samples in different styles (narrative, reading, casual, formal, etc.) and considerable effort was put into the problem of the precise identification of the informant's socio-economic status (strategies usually borrowed from sociology, including Lloyd Warner's Social Class in America, 1962 or August Hollingshead's Social Class and Mental Illness, 1958). Dialectologists who were unfamiliar with

these methodologies were initially distressed by what appeared to be a sell-out to the sociologists (emphasis on statistics, sampling, etc.) and by an initial confusion about what such strategies implied. For example, the new descriptions of Vernacular Black English included features which dialectologists knew to be characteristic of whites as well. In some quarters, it was observed, in fact, that there really was no difference between the speech of Blacks and whites in, for example, the South. If one used a methodology which ignored the frequency of occurrence of given linguistic features, such an observation would be natural. But the newer research in social dialects pointed out that in communities in which a given feature, even a stigmatized feature, was used by more than one SES, by more than one race or by more than one group of any social category, a clearly discernible stratification was frequently evident. The following figure clearly demonstrates such stratification.

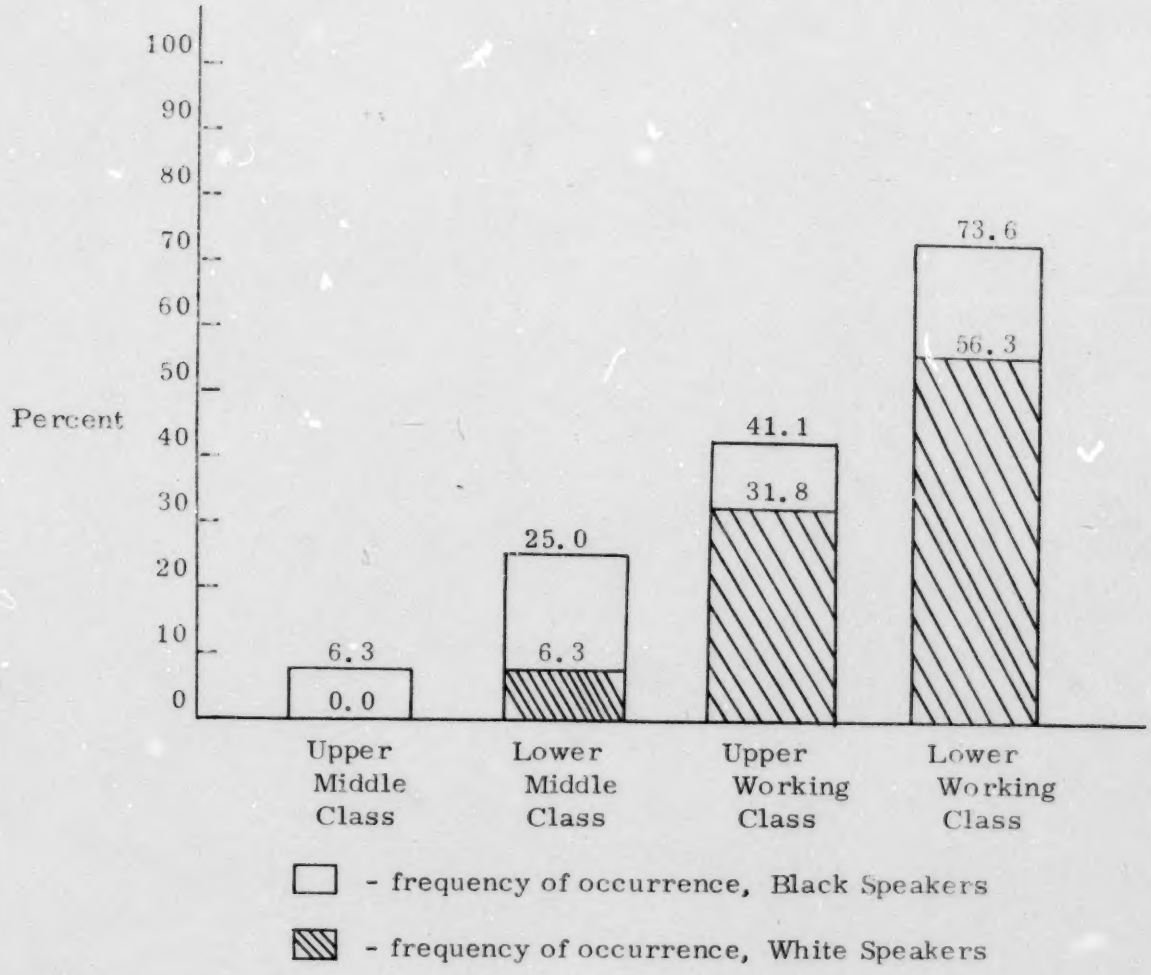

Figure 1. Multiple Negation: Frequency of occurrence in Detroit, by SES group (Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1967:38).

Note that the frequency of occurrence of the use of multiple negation across four SES groups in Detroit is maintained regardless of the race of the speakers, but that Blacks use multiple negatives at a higher frequency than do whites. Further information reveals that men use them at a higher rate than do women. Such data cannot tell us that Blacks use multiple negatives and that whites do not. Nor could it say that men use them and women do not. But it does offer rich information about the tendencies toward higher or lower variability usage than we could ever obtain from a methodology which offered only a single instance of such

usage as evidence of its use or non-use. The figures above represent a number of informants in each of the four SES groups and a large quantity of occurrences of the feature for each informant represented in the group. In the case of multiple negation, in addition to tabulating the occurrences, it was necessary to see them in relationship to a meaningful touchstone. Thus every single negative and every multiple negative in each speaker's speech sample were added together to form a universe of potential multiple negatives. The figures, tabulated above, display the relationship of the occurrence of multiple negatives in relationship to all potential multiple negatives.

It is reasonably safe to assume that the extent of language variation is much broader than typical linguistic atlas research methodologies ever revealed. If an informant is asked, for example, what he calls the stuff in the London air, he may respond only once /fag/. If he should happen to use the /a/ vowel before a voiced velar stop only 50% of the time during all the occasions in which he refers to this concept during a ten-year period, this variability will be totally lost in this single representation in the interview. If he talks continuously for thirty minutes or so, he might use this pronunciation a dozen or more times, giving an increasingly more probable representation of his actual usage. Of course, such data gathering techniques work better for pronunciations in which the inventory of possible occurrences is very high, than they do for lexicon. On the other hand, research in social dialects indicates that phonology and grammar are more crucial indicators than lexicon, a factor which certainly justifies high-lighting them for research.

A second rather serious, misunderstanding of recent social dialect research by dialect geographers relates to the different focus of spatial inves-

tigation. In the study of Detroit speech, for example, little effort was made to relate the results to Memphis or to Boston. It was a synchronic study of one urban area. No effort was made to obtain only native speakers, since a native-only population does not represent Detroit speech any more than a non-native population would. The question was not "How do native Detroiters talk?", however interesting such a subject might be. Rather, the focus was on Detroit speech at a given point in time. Perhaps more controversial were some of the generalizations made as a result of similar studies of Vernacular Black English in Detroit, Washington, D. C. and New York. These studies revealed an amazing similarity in the language behavior of Black speakers in these three different kinds of cities. The generalizations about urban, northern, Black Vernacular English were mistakenly taken to mean that they represented all Vernacular Black English speakers in this country. This is, of course, not an accurate understanding. More recent research seems to indicate a decreasing frequency of occurrence of certain features of Vernacular Black English as one moves spatially away from the deep South (Wolfram 1972).

In short, then, the newer focus on social dialects tended to build on the shoulders of the work of dialect geographers, adding the dimensions of a finer sampling procedure (random or stratified, rather than convenience sampling), an emphasis on grammar and phonology (as opposed to lexicon), a focus on quantitative data (in contrast to single occurrence representation), an examination of urban rather than rural informants and a sense of the primacy of the social group (rather than regional area) as the unit for correlation with linguistic variation.

This approach to language variation is the view originally taken by

William Labov (1966) in his classic study, The Social Stratification of English in New York City. In it, Labov's aim was to work with units that were socially determined in advance. Thus, the approach advocated gathering data from a large number of people who were each chanracterzed as belonging to specific social classes, ages. sexes and races, or whatever else was relevant. This approach was also followed by Roger Shuy (1967) in the Detroit Dialect Study, in which he used a modified Hollingshead scale to quantify the SES of all 720 informants in his stratified sample.

The use of such social groupings becomes obvious as one examines the further developments of variation theory in the study of social dialects. Taking advantage of the known SES indicators, Labov began looking to them for explanations of the language behavior of his informants. Such information was then incorporated into the actual formal linguistic rules which described this speech. These rules were called variable rules. They contrasted with the more traditional optional rules in grammars in that they improved the explanatory power of such rules by taking advantage of the impressively regular constraints on variability noted in the above studies.

One major goal of variable rule analysis, then, was the attempt to incorporate such variability into the main body of linguistic theory. Labov wanted to learn just exactly how variation works in language, but he was also interested in discovering the limits of grammatical competence. He was of the opinion that there is no end to the writing of grammars since the form that the grammar takes is a set of quantitative, variable relations (Labov 1973). Labov's rule which accounts for contraction in Vernacular Black English, for example, is shown as follows (1973:85):

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{voc} \\ -\text{str} \\ +\text{cen} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow \emptyset \;/\; \begin{bmatrix} *\text{Pro} \\ \text{V} \end{bmatrix} \quad \#\# \quad \begin{bmatrix} \overline{\ }\text{T} \end{bmatrix} \quad \begin{matrix} C_0^1 \\ [*\text{nas}] \end{matrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \alpha\text{Vb} \\ \beta\text{ gn} \\ -\gamma\text{ NP} \end{bmatrix}$$

This rule deals with the removal of a schwa (+voc, -str, +cen $\longrightarrow$ $\emptyset$) which occurs initially before a single consonant (C_0^1) in a word with a tense marker (+T) incorporated. When a pronoun precedes (Pro) or a nasal consonant follows (nas), the rule is categorical (*). Variable rule analysis not only mentions the various alternative possibilities (structural grammar did as much, but swept some variations under the rug while calling them free variation), but also ranks how they constrain the rule. In this case, the alpha (α), or greatest constraint, does not show a high degree of ordering in that a preceding vowel (αV) and a following verb (αVb) have approximately equal effect on the application of the rule. The effect of a "gonna" (gn) following is less than either of these, however, and is therefore given the beta (β) constraint. The gamma (γ) constraint, the presence or the absence of a noun phrase, is even less powerful.

Not satisfied with the sort of analysis which mapped linguistic features onto populations, a somewhat different approach to the study of social dialects was proposed by a group of ethnographers. Although anthropologists had been doing ethnographies for decades, only recently have they begun working on the notion that the place of language in society is cross-culturally variable (Hymes 1966). The perspective of such scholars (led by Dell Hymes, Joel Sherzer, Roger Abrahams, Richard Bauman, John Gumperz and others) is that the language forms studied by social dialectologists cannot be understood properly unless all the pertinent social facts surrounding those forms are first known. They appreciate some of the usefulness of the more conventional sociolinguistics

in which linguistic data and sociological data are discovered in separate operations but they feel that ethnographic investigation is "...logically prior to it, as a means of determining what the culturally relevant variables are in the first place" (Bauman 1973:158). Such an investigation begins with a definition of the speech community to be studied (intuitive, speculative and subject to later modification), then determines the elements of speaking behavior within the community. Such components typically include the linguistic varieties in use (styles, dialects and languages), the linguistic units of description (speech acts, events situations and genres in use), the rules governing what is talked about, the tones or manners that may be conducted (serious, mocking, etc.), the locally defined contexts for speaking, the participants, the goals, norms of interaction (interrupting, voice raising, etc.), and norms of interpretation (what to take seriously, etc.).

It is always difficult to attach people to positions and it is relatively safe to assume that any attempt to do so will be, in one sense or another, in error. The earlier mapping of linguistic features onto sociological information, for example, has waned in the attention of most linguists who, in some cases, have moved to a diametrically opposite position. Although ethnographers might accuse Labov of such a position because of his early work, there is little indication that he would hold to the priority of social status today. As indicated earlier, his work has taken on the form of an effort to encorporate variability into linguistic rules, a procedure which most certainly puts language first. Today the major source of support for the primacy of social function in the study of social dialect seems to be from the ethnographers of communication rather than from less anthropologically oriented linguists.

The Social Group and Linguistic Variety as Equal.

Labov's variable rules are written for specially well-defined and previously-determined social groups and based on the frequency of occurrence of the feature under specific conditions. Henrietta Cedergren and David Sankoff (forthcoming) adopt basically the same approach but bring a more sophisticated mathematical theory to the task of describing such variation. Specifically they make use of probabilities associated with rules rather than frequencies. They feel that a person's performance is a statistical reflection of his competence. The frequencies observed in individual performance are used to determine the probabilities that each constraint, whether linguistic or social, contributes to the application of a particular rule. Naturally, it is not believed that such precise numbers exist in the heads of speakers; rather that statistical tendencies are what is reflected. In such a manner, rules are written for the speech community and such rules specify the linguistic constraints on their applications. They are accompanied by tables which provide the probabilities determined for each of the linguistic constraints and the probabilities for any relevant social parameters.

In an effort to test the appropriateness of this approach, Cedergren and Sankoff performed an experiment on r-spirantization. Once the probabilities associated with linguistic and social constraints were determined for the speech community, the researchers tested to see how well the results applied to actual individuals. In this case, the significant social constraint turned out to be social class. The researchers set the input probability at the probability level associated with each speaker's social class and checked the match between the predictions made by the rule and the observed data. The

predictions turned out to be fairly close, confirming the hypothesis to their satisfaction. This equal use of social parameters and linguistic constraints to account for language variation, then, operates somewhere between the extremes of social constraints as primary and linguistic constraints as the independent variable.

Linguistic Constraints as Primary.

In order to discuss the primacy of the linguistic constraint in the study of language variation, it is first necessary to describe a linguistic method known as implicational analysis. Although implicational scales have been used in other disciplines (especially in sociology, where they bear the name of Guttman scales), they are relatively new to linguistic analysis. David DeCamp (1971) began to experiment with such scales as he worked with Jamaican creole and the approach has also been used by linguists on various social dialects in the Americas (Bickerton 1972; Wolfram forthcoming).

C. -J. N. Bailey (forthcoming) is a prominent advocate of the linguistic constraint as independent variable philosophy of language variation. His goal is to write panlectal rules which cover the entire language system. Each individual has a subset of the rules and more general forms of the rules than the panlectal rules which account for them. A speech community, in this case, is a group of people who evaluate linguistic variables in the same way (as favored or as stigmatized) and who have the same algorithms.

Implicational scales are used in rule writing in such a way that a pattern of outputs is implied in the rule itself. Bailey maintains that the time factor accounts for all other kinds of differentiation, whether geographical, social, stylistic or whatever. Thus his rules include the notions of marking (based on further developments of the phonological marking of Jacobson [1968] and Chomsky and Halle [1971]) and im-

plicational coefficients in such a way that the rule generates an implicational pattern of outputs which also take into consideration the environments in which the outputs occur. This series of outputs makes up a series of temporally differentiated lects which are minimally different from those which follow (called isolects). This temporal differentiation reflects the social parameters of language, according to Bailey, who goes on to treat them as algorithms which define the place in the series of temporal isolects where a particular combination of social characteristics falls. Thus these algorithms are devices which convert unilinear implicational patterns into multidimensional sociolinguistic matrices. The relevant social parameters are probably best identified by trial and error, as Fasold, Wolfram, Labov and others have done with the variables of social class, race, sex, style and age. In considering the dynamic aspects of language, age factors seem to be the most obvious differentiations, but this need not always be true. If a given rule has four environments, in such a way that environment 1 is heavier-weighted than environment 2, which is more than 3, which is more than 4, the implicational output will generate the application of the rule first in 1 and last in 4. Since 4 is the lightest-weighted environment, its presence implies the presence of all heavier environments.

In Vernacular Black English, for example, the rule for t, d deletion in the environment of word boundary and following vowel may be described in a multidimensional sociolinguistic matrix at one particular time as follows:

	Most Informal	Rather Informal	Rather Formal	Most Formal
Upper Middle Class	2	1	-	-
Lower Middle Class	3	2	1	-
Upper Working Class	4	3	2	1
Lower Working Class	+	4	3	2

+ = categorical rule application
- = no rule application

The change here is seen to have begun in the lowest class in informal speech. The wave-like characteristic of the outputs is clearly indicated. Sociolinguistic algorithms can be used to determine what temporal isolect is used by a person with certain social characteristics when the isolect associated with one set of characteristics is known. An algorithm might state, for example, for change involving disfavoring, that one isolect is less advanced for each more monitored style. In this way the linguistic aspects are treated as central, and a rule can be written to generate temporal differentiation which will then fit the social differentiation (keeping in mind that, in this model, various types of social differentiation are embraced as temporal differentiation in language change). Bailey feels that the reason linguists have paid so little attention to variation in language is because it is really a part of language change, a topic less favored for linguistic study for many years.

At the present time, therefore, at least three approaches to the linguistic analysis of social dialects are visible. Within each approach, various modifications and variations are under constant development. The result has

been a healthy ferment in the field of linguistics, leading to a new theoretical posture which goes under several labels, including variation theory. Thus, out of an initial concern for social dialects has developed a mission to the field of linguistics itself, a mission which has opened the doors of inquiry considerably wider than they had been during the time when the only legitimate concerns of linguistics were for abstract universals. This newer focus has clearly demonstrated that the concern for variability is not mere surface level triviality and that human society must be considered along with the human mind as we examine the fantastic complexity we call language.

The Mission to Education. Until very recently, the mission of applied linguistics in America has been carried out almost exclusively in the field of education and, within it, very heavily in the area of teaching English as a second language. Not unlike other educational ventures, we have seen the problem not in ourselves but in foreigners. It seems quite obvious that linguistics can be applied, as well, to problems of native language learners, but it took the "discovery" of the social dialects of minorities in American education to begin to bring this about (Shuy 1973). The attitude that "other people have the problems, not us" is still with us, however, even as we extend the definition of applied linguistics from foreigners to native American oppressed peoples. The curious thing is that many of the same principles which have been used to describe the problems of minorities are equally applicable to white, suburban school systems. All Americans must come to grips with variation, receptively and productively, in speaking, writing, listening and reading. Of course, when one weighs the cruciality of the problems of the minority with those of the majority, one must admit that creating survival

is more critical that developing potential effectiveness. Thus, the focus on the minority child is probably justifiable. Such a focus has begun to have effects on the teaching of oral language, on the teaching of reading, on the teaching of composition, on the development of teacher training programs and on procedures of evaluation. Again, it began with the study of Vernacular Black English. Expansion into other areas, though slow, is finally beginning.

The Teaching of Oral Language.

Before the intensive study of social dialects began, language variation was scarcely considered as a topic in the teaching of oral language in the American classroom. Characteristically, a pre-school language program followed a deficit model. One descriptive brochure reads as follows:

> In order for children to achieve in school, they must learn the language used in school. . . the role of the teacher of young children in fostering the development of good language skills is especially important. He must realize that language competence is a necessary first step in intellectual development. As a child learns more language, he progresses in his ability to think symbolically and abstractly. Without sufficient language development the child's conceptual development will be inhibited. (Parsons n.d.)

It was generally asserted that inadequate language meant the absence of accepted school language and the first step toward learning required the acquisition of school English. To be sure, the battle with this position has not yet been won, but the advent of the study of social dialects has contributed greatly

to its eventual demise. The whole foundation of compensatory education might have been challenged by attacks from sources other than language, but there can be little doubt about the effectiveness of the changes of linguists in this issue. Perhaps most effective have been the writings of William Labov (1969), Joan Baratz (1970) and Courtney Cazden (1971) on this matter. The field of early childhood education has been rocked by charges against the logic of standard English as opposed to the illogic of non-standards of all varieties and it now has been clearly shown that logical propositions may be adequately stated in vernacular as effectively as in standard English. The latter, in fact, may well help obfuscate logical expression.

Since most programs for the pre-school or early childhood rely heavily on language, considerable attention has been drawn to the use of vernacular in these settings. It is generally being recognized that such programs must encourage the child to be free to use his language regardless of the status generally accorded it in the adult world. There are very few ways for the child to communicate with the teacher other than in his habitual dialect and this fact is slowly but gradually being recognized. This is not to say that such programs have learned to accept the legitimacy of vernacular dialect, or that they refrain from trying to wipe it out as soon as possible, or that they understand the relationship between rejecting a child's language and rejecting the total child. But some small progress seems apparent and perhaps we can be thankful for even that.

Beyond the pre-school level, even less progress seems to have been made in dealing with the many legitimate varieties of the English language. The school's first thoughts were to eradicate them. Next it was suggested

that they try to develop a kind of bidialectalism. Then it was said that bidialectalism was also racist and that what was really needed was to change the attitudes of the majority to accept linguistic and cultural pluralism. Programs for the schools have been developed for eradication--assimilation theory--and for the bidialectal approach (Feigenbaum 1971), but nothing, as yet, for the third approach.

Perhaps the most troublesome aspect of the social dialect/oral language controversy has been the stance of its advocates. At no time has there been a willingness to accept even the potential sincerity of the motives of the camp whose position was attacked. The issue has made enemies irrationally, probably because of the heavily charged emotions involved. It did not seem reasonable to the bidialectalists, for example, that advocates of the eradication position might be acting sincerely toward the solution of a problem. Nor did it occur to eradicationists that bidialectalists might be acting with honestly motivated integrity. Most recently, the third position, one which defied a neat label but which may be symbolized as the "teach whites to improve their attitude" camp, has pictured bidialectalists as racist opportunists whose actions have been motivated by willful ignorance and crass personal gain (Sledd 1969). Otherwise respectable scholars have resorted to tactics of name calling, innuendo, wrenching from context, doctored quotations and selective reading in the attacks on presumably opposing positions (Sledd 1972).

In general, it has never been very clear what the schools can or should do about the speech of the students and it is not at all clear what direct good the study of social dialects has provided thus far. One serious question involves whether or not children can even be taught to add to their speech repertoires

or to wipe out their vernacular speech. (This does not mean that they cannot learn it; only that they cannot be taught it.) Indirectly, however, it seems that the schools are benefitting from the issue. Social dialect has provided a physical observable focus for an issue which might otherwise be too abstract to be observed. It has been difficult, for example, to identify aspects of Black culture which are agreed upon by authorities and are clearly distinguishable from non-Black culture (Abrahams 1972). Since Vernacular Black English has both qualitative and quantitative differences from other varieties, it provides a more physical focus. With such a focus, many questions of group identity, cultural pluralism and style can be clearly addressed in the classroom. The subject of social dialect is at least known to the general public and although methodologies, materials and philosophical underpinnings are far from settled, the question of language variation is clearly on the docket for eventual consideration.

The Teaching of Reading.

If the relationship between the study of Vernacular Black English and the teaching of oral language has proved controversial, the relationship to the field of reading has been even more so. Again, the area of assumed evil motivation has been a central issue. At the moment, at least five hypotheses have been posited as methods for reducing the mismatch between the Vernacular Black English used by some first grade children and the middle class language in which their initial reading materials are written (Shuy 1972).

1. First teach children to speak standard English. Then teach them to read it.
2. Teach teachers about social dialect so that they will not confuse

its use with reading problems.

3. Develop beginning materials in the targeted social dialect in order to reduce the mismatch of oral language use to the printed page.
4. Develop beginning reading materials which systematically avoid the mismatch of the spoken social dialect to standard English written materials.
5. Make use of the Language Experience Approach (which argues that the teachers write down exactly what the child says, then have him read it).

To date, there has been little reason to support any one of these approaches individually or in combination. Research has been hampered by inordinate negative public reaction to any attempts to implement number 3. Number 1, the traditional, historical approach, has never been proved to be supportable. Some progress is being made on number 2 but the road has been, and will continue to be, slow and rocky. Number 4 has been implemented in only the most indirect fashion to date. Number 5 has been restricted by the average teacher's difficulty in writing down exactly what a child says rather than what she thinks he says or what she might wish he had said.

Regardless of the apparent inconclusiveness of the above hypotheses, the study of social dialects has contributed certain benefits to the field of reading. The call of linguists for more realistic and believable language in beginning reading materials has helped remove some of the stilted language of past primers. The focus on syntax by those who study social dialects, linking with their stress on the importance of processing whole language units rather than mere letter-sound correspondences has helped modify somewhat the current

reading instruction along these lines. The linguist's contention that surface-structure oral reading does not necessarily reflect deep-structure comprehension is helping play down supposed misreadings such as She go for She goes by speakers of Vernacular Black English. Some progress is being made in helping teachers understand that learning to read and learning to speak standard English are not the same thing and that an attempt to teach and evaluate both at the same time is a confusion of tasks for the teacher and child alike.

The Teaching of Writing.

Several years ago a large Midwestern university instituted a special "relaxed admission" program especially geared to inner-city Black students. Paradoxically, the students were flunked out of the program in one year by the freshman English program. An examination of the papers of a sample of these students revealed that 42% of the "errors" marked by the instructors were directly attributable to interference of Vernacular Black English phonology on the students' spelling or Vernacular Black English grammar on their sentence structure. To be sure, these students also had the more typical freshman composition problems (failure of pronoun to agree with antecedent, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, etc.) but they had the additional handicap of all the features which are often used to describe their home dialect. To this day, no commerically published materials exist which address the question of the special kind of interference noted above. One commercial publisher rejected a proposal to produce such materials on the grounds that the potential buying public would be too small. Another rejected the idea because it did not want to risk negative public reaction from the Black or white general public. Under the sponsorship of the National Institute of

Education, such materials are currently under development at the Central Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory in St. Louis (Long forthcoming). This project grew directly out of the past research on Vernacular Black English and, barring negative public reaction of the sort that has plagued the development of reading materials, it promises to add significantly to the teaching of composition in the classroom.

The Development of Teacher Training.

As one might predict, the more institutionalized the setting, the slower desired changes can be brought about. Drastic changes in teacher preparation (such as putting language at the core of the education of elementary education teachers rather than at the periphery) suggest drastic staffing problems. Should the professor of the history of education be let go in favor of an educational linguist? The problem is not unlike the potential difficulty facing speech departments as they gradually tool up by educating future speech teachers to distinguish between pathological and social variation in the speech of their students. If they suddenly require all speech teachers to take a course in social dialects, who will teach these courses? Not only are few speech professors trained in this area but also very few linguists. The education major (and often the speech major) frequently gets no background whatsoever in phonetics and language, despite the fact that the only communication system the child has when he enters school is his oral language. How do we incorporate this language training (general linguistics, language acquisition, and language variation should provide the bare minimum) with reconstituting staff balance and reordering certification requirements? And how do we deal with the buck-passing that ultimately stops with the teacher, who gets blamed for

all the failures in her training and in her bureaucracy simply because there is no one else to blame failure on except the children? Changing from within may be a great deal more difficult than even the most optimistic observer might suggest. The system simply won't admit that it is in trouble. To change it will involve subtlety far beyond anything linguists have suggested to date.

Perhaps the influence of the study of social dialect has not yet made significant in-roads in the preparation of teachers but there are many indications that some sort of change is in the offing. The International Reading Association recently formed a special Commission on Teacher Education which included two members who represented the interests of linguistic and cultural pluralism. The American Speech and Hearing Association also has such a commission which has been active in carrying out workshops throughout the country which focus on the differences between speech pathologies and socially induced language difference. An early supporter of linguistic pluralism has been The National Council of Teachers of English, which has supported many publications in the area.

Evaluation.

The study of social dialect is also at least partially responsible for the recent flurry of concern about fairness in the practice of standardized testing in this country. To be sure, the situation was brought to a head by the current search for educational accountability. Examination of extant standardized tests in English and reading has clearly demonstrated cultural and linguistic biasing toward the middle class student. The major point to be made here is that it is unlikely that exact pin-pointing of mismatch between child language and test language would have been called to our attention without the flurry of

research on social dialect, especially Vernacular Black English, of the past decade. The broader implication of this research, however, is that it has led to a number of other insights into the nature of the use of language in standardized testing. As linguists examined such tests for potential mismatches they also observed areas of general weakness which went beyond specific Vernacular Black English concerns. It was discovered, for example, that by changing mongrel to curr in one question in one reading test, the scores of West Virginia white children could be increased by as much as three months on the scale of reading age (Connolly 1969). Areas of general linguistic and contextual ambiguity not related to Vernacular Black English were pointed out by Whiteman (1971) and Sullivan (1971) in their studies of The California English Test and The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, respectively. To be sure, specialists in reading tests have been questioning the misuses of such instruments by the schools, but it cannot be denied that the study of social dialect has also played a role in the current re-examination of excesses in this field.

Thus, despite the criticisms by people who represent those who no longer wish to be researched, by those who feel that researchers have exacerbated racial tensions by calling attention to a situation that should have been inadequate or malicious, by social dialect researchers who disagree with each others' research findings or approaches or by those who see still other faults in what has gone on in the past decade of the study of social dialect, certain advances have been made because of it. The general tendency in the schools was either to ignore the situation or to attribute it to genetic inferiority, individual ignorance or willful stupidity. In general, today's situation is not quite that unenlightened. Equally interesting is that this wedge in the crack has begun

to open the door toward the solution of a number of broader educational problems which have to do with linguistic and cultural variability in a much larger context than that suggested by minority social dialects. The discovery that Blacks have a wide repertoire of language uses is finally beginning to be seen for what it is--a distinct linguistic advantage. Ignoring for a moment the politics of education which might argue for eradicating or modifying one or more styles or for building new ones, the simple fact of the existence of such a range of styles is beginning to look like a good and useful thing. The binary, right-wrong classroom paradigm is subject to question. People do use language in a number of contexts, for a number of purposes, to a number of different people. Variation in language can be seen to be the fantastically complex tool with which degrees of subtlety can be effected, tone can be manipulated and poetry can be produced. At one time, we seemed to have wanted everyone to talk and write alike. Today even the most pessimistic observer will have to admit that the scene is gradually changing.

The Mission to Other Fields. Although the missions of social dialect study to linguistics and to education are, perhaps, its clearest and hitherto most dominant missions, other goals are also beginning to develop. To those who work with language, it has long been perplexing why other disciplines do not perceive more clearly how important language is to the successful understanding of their tasks. For example, linguists wonder why sociologists haven't used language data to study social stratification, especially since language is apparently so unobserved by its users. One would think that a medium which is used unconsciously would provide a better index of stratification than the more conscious indices frequently studied by social scientists. The answer,

of course, is that the same unconsciousness exists for the sociologist as it does for the average speaker. Opening up such consciousness is one of the missions of social dialect study to sociology. In a very rudimentary way, correlations of the frequency of occurrence of a particular language feature characterized the early work in this area. In Detroit, for example, a study of the frequency of occurrence of multiple negatives before indefinites (such as "I don't want none") yielded the sort of stratification noted earlier in Figure 1. Further developments in the study of social dialects by sociologists may help that field better understand other aspects of social organization as it is revealed through language (i.e. openings, closings, interruptions, clarification, hedging), competence as personal ability (not merely grammatical knowledge, systematic potential or superorganic property of the community), community boundaries as defined by shared ways of speaking (Hymes 1972) and many other concepts.

It will not be the task of this paper to catalogue all of the current or potential uses of the study of social dialect to other disciplines, but one more example, this one from the field of medicine, seems appropriate. Preliminary research on the problems of communication between doctor and patient reveals a continuum roughly as follows (Shuy 1973):

Doctor speaking Doctor talk	Doctor speaking Doctor talk but also understanding Patient talk	Doctor speaking and understanding both Doctor and Patient talk	Patient speaking and understanding both Patient and Doctor talk	Patient speaking Patient talk but also understanding Doctor talk	Patient speaking Patient talk

By far the largest part of the medical history, from the data available so far, indicates a doctor dominance in language and perspective in the standard medical interview. That is, most of the linguistic adjustments are expected to be

made by the pateint. It appears that in medicine, as in the schools, the client is required to understand the specialized language forms and functions of the expert. In the above continuum, when breakdown in communication occurs, it occurs more often and more seriously at the polar extremes. Some patients cannot or will not speak doctor language. Likewise, some doctors cannot or will not speak patient language. The obvious area of hope lies in the central portions of the continuum, where a kind of bilingualism obtains. What is lacking, of course, is a realization by physicians that language variation of many types is hindering them from the successful completion of their task. A great deal needs to be known about whether or not the specialist should (or could) learn to speak client language. But there is little question about the specialist's need to learn receptive competence of the various social dialects which he expects to meet. It is patently absurd for physicians to run the risk of getting inaccurate information in the medical interview simply because a patient does not want to admit his own ignorance of the question or because the question was indelicately asked.

It would be presumptuous to claim that the study of social dialects has permeated a number of fields or disciplines. But it would be foolish to overlook some of the expanded vision for social dialect research that has been developing in recent years. Those who were active in the field in the sixties may well remember the general sense of inferiority attributed to social dialects of all sorts at that time.

In conclusion, it should be reemphasized that the study of social dialects in this country has received increasing attention since about the middle of the sixties. This increased emphasis has been particularly strong within the field

of linguistics proper where an almost total about face seems to be taking place from the former preoccupation with universals rather than variability. Papers on some aspects of the study of language variation have increased both in number and in quality at meetings of linguists such as the Linguistic Society of America during the past decade. One outgrowth of this interest has been the creation of the Lectological Association, founded in 1972 at the first conference on New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English (also referred to as NWAVE or New Wave). This loosely conceived and run organization exists solely for the purpose of convening scholars of like interests annually and for keeping them abreast of new developments via The Lectological Newsletter. Since its inception, the scope of interest has been expanded beyond the study of variation of English to other languages as well. Since NWAVE's founding, the annual meetings have been held at Georgetown University, which currently houses the organization, publishes the newsletter and whose press publishes the papers presented at the annual meetings (Bailey and Shuy 1973; Shuy and Bailey 1974; Shuy and Fasold forthcoming).

The increased concern for the study of social dialects in linguistics has not overshadowed the development of such an interest in education. The National Council of Teachers of English, for example, has shown continued interest in such matters. One of the first publications on social dialects in the sixties, in fact, was Social Dialects and Language Learning (1965), a NCTE publication. Other publications on the interrelationship of social dialect to education include A. Aaron's special anthology issue of the FL Reporter (1969), publications by the International Reading Association (Laffey and Shuy 1973), The Center for Applied Linguistics' entire Urban Language Series, many

publications by Georgetown University Press, and several commercial press publications (Shores, 1972; DeStephano 1972; Cazden et al. 1972). Considerable recent concern has been expressed over the effects of social dialects on educational testing, as witnessed by the IRA conference on testing held at Georgetown University in August, 1973. On the other hand, little or no progress seems to have been made in conveying the major tennets of social dialectology into teacher education pre-service programs (Shuy, 1973).

Historians who in some future generation decide to determine what linguists were excited about in the sixties and seventies will undoubtedly see social dialect study as a recurring theme. Nor has the field come close to exhausting its natural resources. What began as a focus on minority variation in language has gradually begun to be understood as equally crucial for mainstream speakers of English. It is likely that future research will be done on the variation exhibited in the speech of lawyers or business executives. We will need to find out what constitutes the substance and strategies of "good-guy" speech (strategies for humanizing one's status or position), service encounters (Merrit 1973) and many other not-necessarily minority-oriented topics. The study of social dialects in literature has always been a fruitful area for investigation, but the newer developments in analytical procedures has reopened that door to further investigation. Descriptive studies are still lacking for many speech communities in America and it appears that the potential for further investigation will insure a continuance of interest in social dialectology for many years to come.

REFERENCES

Aarons, A. et al. 1969. Linguistic-cultural differences and American education (special anthology issue). The Florida FL Reporter 7.1.

Abrahams, Roger. 1972. A true and exact survey of talking Black. To appear in Richard Bauman and Roger Abrahams (eds.), An ethnography of speaking. Cambridge: At the University Press.

Bailey, Charles-James N. and Roger W. Shuy. 1973. New ways of analyzing variation in English. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

_____. forthcoming. Variation and language theory. Arlington, Virginia: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Baratz, Joan. 1970. Teaching reading in an urban Negro school. In Frederick Williams (ed.), Language and poverty. Chicago: Markham.

Bauman, Richard. 1973. An ethnographic framework for the investigation of communicative behaviors. In R. Abrahams and R. Troike (eds.), Language and cultural diversity in American education. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 154-166.

Bickerton, Derek. 1972. The structure of polylectal grammars. In R. Shuy (ed.), Sociolinguistics: current trends and prospects. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

Cazden, Courtney. 1971. Approaches to dialects in early childhood educa-

tion. In R. Shuy (compiler), Social dialects and interdisciplinary perspectives. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Cazden, Courtney, V. John and D. Hymes. 1972. Functions of language in the classroom. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cedergren, Henrietta and David Sankoff. forthcoming. Variable rules: performance as a statistical reflection of competence. To appear in Language.

Chomsky, Noam and Morris Halle. 1971. Sound patterns of English. New York: Harper and Row.

Connolly, John. 1969. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills in a rural West Virginia community. Paper presented at A. E. R. A. (Los Angeles).

DeCamp, David. 1971. Toward a generative analysis of a post-creole speech continuum. In Dell Hymes (ed.), Pidginization and creolization of languages. Cambridge: At the University Press.

DeStephano, Johanna. 1972. Language, society and education: a profile of Black English. Worthington, Ohio: Jones Publishing Company.

Fasold, Ralph W. and Walt Wolfram. 1970. Some linguistic features of Negro dialect. In R. Fasold and R. Shuy (eds.), Teaching standard English in the inner city. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

_____. 1972. Tense marking in Black English: a linguistic and social analysis. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Feigenbaum, Irwin. 1971. English now. New York: New Century.

Golden, Ruth. 1965. Instructional record for changing regional speech patterns. Folkways/Scholastic, No. 9323.

Hollingshead, August. 1958. Social class and mental illness. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Hymes, Dell, 1966. Models of the interaction of language and social setting. Journal of Social Issues 23.2:8-28.

_____. 1972. The scope of sociolinguistics. In R. Shuy (ed.), Sociolinguistics: current trends and prospects. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Jacobson, Roman. 1968. Child language, aphasia and phonological universals. The Hauge: Mouton.

Labov, William, Paul Cohen, Clarence Robbins and K.C. Lewis. 1965. A study of the nonstandard English of Negro and Puerto Rican speakers in New York City. U.S. Office of Education Cooperative Research Project No. 3288.

_____. 1966. The social stratification of English in New York City. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

_____. 1969. The logic of non-standard English. In J. Alatis (ed.), Georgetown Round Table Monograph Series, No. 22. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

_____. 1973. Sociolinguistic patterns. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Laffey, James and Roger W. Shuy. 1973. Language differences: do they interfere?. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.

Legum, Stanley et al. 1971. The speech of young Black children in Los Angeles. Southwest Regional Laboratory Technical Report #3. Inglewood, California: Southwest Regional Laboratory.

Long, Barbara. forthcoming. Teaching writing to speakers of non-standard English.

Merrit, Marilyn. 1973. On service encounters. To appear in Anthropological Linguistics.

Parsons, Theodore W. n.d. Teaching young children. Stanford: Professional Development Systems.

Shores, David. 1972. Contemporary English. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company.

Shuy, Roger W. 1965. Social dialects and language learning. Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English.

_____, Walt Wolfram and William Riley. 1967. Linguistic correlates of social stratification in Detroit Speech. U.S. Office of Education Cooperative Research Project No. 6-1347.

_____, Walt Wolfram and William Riley. 1968. Field techniques in an urban language study. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

_____. 1972. Speech differences and teaching strategies: how different is enough?. In R. Hodges and E. Rudorf (eds.), Language and learning to read: what teachers should know about language. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

_____. 1973. The study of Vernacular Black English as a factor in educational change. Research in English (Spring).

_____. 1973. Problems of communication in the cross-cultural

medical interview. Paper presented at American Sociological Association (August).

Shuy, Roger W. 1973. What is the study of variation useful for?. To appear in R. Shuy and R. Fasold (eds.), New ways of analyzing variation II. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

_____ and Charles-James N. Bailey. 1974. Toward tomorrow's linguistics. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

_____ and Ralph W. Fasold. forthcoming. New ways of analyzing variation II. Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press.

Sledd, James. 1969. Bidialectalism: the linguistics of white supremacy. English Journal 58. 9:1307-1315.

_____. 1972. Doublespeak: dialectology in the service of Big Brother. College English 33. 4:435-456.

Sullivan, Jennifer. 1971. A sociolinguistic review of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. In D. Smith and W. Riley (eds.), Georgetown University Working Papers in Linguistics, No. 5 (Sociolinguistics). Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 61-75.

Warner, Lloyd. 1962. Social class in America. New York: Harper and Row.

Whiteman, Marcia. 1971. Dialect differences in testing the language of children: a review of the California Language Tests. In D. Smith and W. Riley (eds.), Georgetown University Working Papers in Linguistics, No. 5 (Sociolinguistics). Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 48-60.

Wolfram, Walt. 1972. Black/white speech differences revisited. In

Walt Wolfram and Nona Clarke (eds.), Black/white speech differences. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Wolfram, Walt. forthcoming. The relationship of white southern speech to Vernacular Black English in the deep South. To appear in Language.